

LEGISLATIVE

A look back.... a look ahead

REPORT

STATE SENATOR 13th District

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Dear Neighbor:

Many families are hurting and our job providers are struggling during these turbulent times. My Senate colleagues and I have been intent on finding ways to jumpstart our ailing economy, from helping homeowners avoid foreclosure to removing barriers to job growth. I am writing to update you on this work.

The troubled economy has also led to a very real state budget crisis. In December, the Senate Appropriations Committee authorized a \$134 million cut from the 2-month old budget, but that is only a start.

With a steep looming deficit and a new round of budget talks at hand, there will be more tough choices ahead. Government will have to do more with less, just like countless families across our state. I value your suggestions and hope you will share your priorities by taking a moment to fill out the Budget Survey.

Along with economic issues, I also want to let you know about some other issues, from landmark legislation to protect our waters, to legislation I recently introduced to make road funding more equitable.

It is an honor to be your voice in Lansing and I will continue to work hard on behalf of the people of the 13th district. I welcome your comments, questions and concerns and stand ready to help if you need assistance with any state matter.

As we begin a new year, let's count the blessings we have and work together to build a brighter future for our children.

Sincerely,

State Senator John Pappageorge

"I value your suggestions and hope you will share your priorities by taking a moment to fill out the budget survey on my website at www.SenatorJohnPappageorge.com."



PAPPAGEORGE SUPPORTS HOMEOWNER PROTECTIONS

Foreclosure rates in Michigan are among the highest in the country. In fact, Michigan was one of five states that accounted for over half of the nation's foreclosures in 2007.

The Senate has been at the forefront in providing greater protections for homeowners. Some Senate bills now signed into law:

- **Help homeowners refinance their home loans at lower interest rates to avoid foreclosure;**
- **Require loan officers to register with the state, meet education requirements and undergo background checks; and**
- **Prohibit lenders and brokers from coercing real estate appraisers to inflate the value of property.**

This year, we will be exploring ways to encourage homeowners and lenders to communicate and develop alternatives to foreclosure.



The housing crisis affects everyone, even those homeowners not facing foreclosure. As home prices across much of Michigan drop to levels not seen in a decade or more, we are committed to working on a comprehensive plan to curb fraud and help families keep their homes.

SENATE SPEARHEADS EFFORTS TO PROTECT GREAT LAKES

The presidential approval of the Great Lakes Compact last fall wrapped up a historic process to protect the Great Lakes.

The Senate led the effort to pass the compact in Michigan. It's one part of our work over the last several years to protect our waters.

With the compact now in effect, water diversion outside the Great Lakes basin is banned and common measures are in place to regulate withdrawals within the eight basin states.

Some states will have additional work to do, but Michigan is at the head of the class with new water withdrawal assessment laws. The new rules use a

biologically-based method to regulate water usage. Other states are taking a look at this pioneering work as they develop their own water withdrawal laws.

Michigan also took the lead to keep invasive species out of the Great Lakes. Senate bills enacted into law ban untreated ballast water discharges by oceangoing ships. I am pleased to say a federal court recently upheld Michigan's landmark ballast water law.

As befitting the Great Lakes State, Michigan now has among the strongest water protection laws in the nation. My Senate colleagues and I will continue our efforts to protect our natural resources so they can be used wisely now and in the future.

"I am pleased to say a federal court recently upheld Michigan's landmark ballast water law."

Senator John Pappageorge

PAPPAGEORGE BACKS BILL TO BOOST ECONOMY

The number tells the story - over 500,000 jobs lost in Michigan since 2000. But the figure is more than a cold statistic or a news story. Real people are out of work and families are hurting.

My Senate colleagues and I are working to help our job providers and battered economy rebound. One of our efforts, SB 1038, has just been signed into law. PA 433 of 2008 fixes a problem in the Michigan Business Tax (MBT) by eliminating a "tax on a tax" paid by 50,000 Michigan job providers.

In technical terms, the measure exempts sales taxes and fees from the gross receipts portion of the MBT. In plain terms, the legislation eliminates a roadblock to job creation and business investment growth.

We also passed a bill to eliminate a 22 percent business tax surcharge that further hinders Michigan job providers.

I firmly believe there is no more pressing issue in our state right now than building a competitive business environment that encourages companies to create jobs here in Michigan.



MICHIGAN SENATE BRIEFED ON AUTO INDUSTRY OUTLOOK



Dr. David Cole, Chairman for the Center for Automotive Research, briefed Senators on the long-term prospects for the domestic auto industry. If the car companies can survive the chaotic times at hand, he forecast a bright future, describing Michigan as "the intellectual center of the world's auto industry." Dr. Cole testified before the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee in December.

ROAD FUND DISTRIBUTION

Despite having the largest road system in Michigan after the state trunk line system, with 1,100 more miles than either Wayne or Macomb counties, Oakland County ranks 71 out of the state's 83 counties in road funding.

Current distribution is based on a formula that fails to consider how heavily or lightly roads are traveled. That's why I am fighting to make the allocation of Transportation Fund dollars more equitable.

Under the current distribution system, Oakland County receives \$89.99 per person compared to Keweenaw County's \$569.91 per person. As a result, a lightly traveled rural two-lane road in the Upper Peninsula is treated equal to a heavily used multiple-lane road in Royal Oak.

I recently introduced legislation to change the way the Michigan Department of Transportation distributes road funding. My bill would change the distribution from being based on total mileage to "annual vehicle miles traveled" as determined by the Federal Highway Administration.

Senate Bill 37 has been referred to the Senate Committee on Transportation.

NEW LAW TO BRING JOBS

Late last year, the Senate passed legislation to help make Michigan the center of advanced battery production.

PA 580 of 2008 creates tax credits for advanced battery technology, engineering and production.

In part due to the law's incentives, General Motors recently announced plans to locate its production of advanced batteries for the Chevy Volt right here in Southeast Michigan. Another major cell manufacturing company is also expected to build a factory here.

The new law will help Michigan remain the center of car manufacturing as the auto industry transitions to 21st century technology.

We want to make sure Michigan is at the forefront of this high-tech revolution.



State Senator John Pappageorge

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Pappageorge offers information on how to appeal your property tax assessment

It's that time of year again. Homeowners throughout the 13th Senate district are receiving their annual property tax assessment notice.

If you believe your tax assessment is in error, you may appeal to your local Board of Review, and if necessary, the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

It's important to remember that you **must appeal to the local Board of Review** before you can appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal. Plan now as most Boards of Review meet in early March.

Click here for information on how to effectively appeal your property tax assessment.

SAVING TAXPAYER MONEY - A PROMISING FIRST LOOK

Government reforms sponsored by the Senate were a key part of the 2008 budget resolution. I want to share some early good news on this front with you.

One reform required school districts and other public employers to competitively bid their health benefits. Competitive bidding is a smart way to achieve savings without reducing benefits or coverage.

I am happy to report that a number of school districts have already seen positive results. In fact, a contract recently approved by a school board in northern Michigan could save the district between \$500,000 and \$1 million in health care costs a year!

With a state budget problem that grows larger by the day, common sense reform is one sure way to make government leaner and more efficient.

For a more comprehensive look at recent Senate accomplishments and to keep up-to-date on legislative news, visit my website at www.SenatorJohnPappageorge.com